



HB 4023-A

Joint Committee on Information Management & Technology

February 23, 2018

Introduction:

Good afternoon co-chairs Senator Riley, Representative Nathanson and members of the Joint Committee on Information Management and Technology. For the record my name is Jessica Nguyen-Ventura, Legislative Director for the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). I am here to discuss and support the establishment of the Connecting Oregon Schools Fund, House Bill (HB) 4023-A. Joining me is Carla Wade, Digital Innovations Lead at the Oregon Department of Education who can provide additional information on the technical aspects of HB 4023 A.

Background

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) created the Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries, otherwise known as the E-Rate program. The FCC unveiled a new dedicated state match in its December 2014 E-Rate Modernization Order. Under these new rules, the FCC would provide eligible applicants with an up to 10% additional discount for special construction charges, matching state funding for the project on a dollar-to-dollar basis. In May of 2016, ODE received \$273,062 from the Emergency Fund to support the following school districts with a one-time state match fund for construction:

- Paisley
- Sherman County
- Glendale
- Dufur
- South Wasco
- Santiam Canyon

ODE supports a state match fund being created by the legislature to optimize the use of any future funding allocated for this effort. A state match fund will mitigate against unpredictable schedules and challenges that exist in the construction of scalable infrastructure. This fund will also provide a vehicle to further leverage additional matching funds from the E-Rate program. Based on the most current analysis, ODE estimates there are 43 school districts and charter schools that are without adequate internet connectivity. These schools could leverage the state match funds for increasing broadband connectivity through fiber construction projects.



Of the 43 school districts and charters schools identified as high need, we have determined that 17 submitted applications (470 form) to the FCC E-Rate program during the bidding process ending February 23, 2018, for Special Construction.

Of the 17 school districts and charters school that submitted the applications, we have identified four school districts that intend on submitting a 471 form by March 22, 2018, that indicates a desire to negotiate a contract to move the project forward. The special construction costs would be eligible for the 10% state match and the extra 10% federal E-Rate program. The four districts are Elgin, South Lane, Huntington, and Imbler. They have an estimated project cost of \$6,655,000 with a current project gap of \$1,513,000. Based on our estimates a state matching investment of \$665,500 would reduce the funding gap for these projects to \$182,000.

HB 4023 A engrossed

HB 4023 A engrossed establishes the Connecting Oregon Schools Fund in the State Treasury. The moneys in the fund would be appropriated to ODE for the purpose of providing matching funds for FCC moneys received by school districts for the purpose of providing broadband access. The Connecting Oregon Schools Fund is essential to providing the 10% state match for construction under E-Rate.

Digital equity is a topic of concern as inequities related to broadband access persist when some students, particularly rural and low-income, do not have the same level of broadband and device access as other students outside of school. Gone is an era when students are automatically given textbooks to support their learning. Equity of access includes ensuring access to devices and sufficient high-speed broadband in school, at home, and everywhere else in the community to utilize digital instructional materials, complete homework assignments, and to connect with students, educators, and experts throughout the world anytime, anywhere.

We have an opportunity to play a critical role in promoting the availability of equitable internal broad access among our schools with HB 4023-A. The goal of the Connecting Oregon Schools Fund is to provide every student the opportunity to get a quality education, no matter where you live in the State of Oregon. With this in mind, ODE ask the Joint Committee on Information Management and Technology to approve HB 4023 A.